

Robley

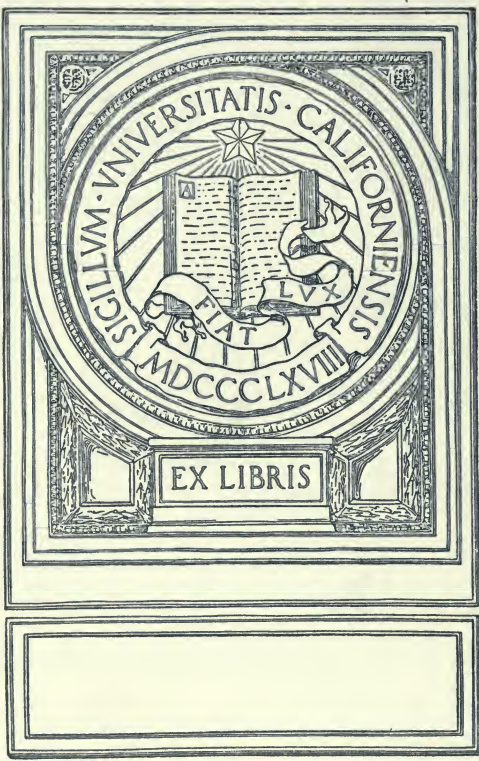
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John Robley

A  
PERMANENT  
AND  
EFFECTUAL REMEDY  
SUGGESTED FOR THE  
EVILS  
UNDER WHICH THE  
BRITISH WEST INDIES  
NOW LABOUR.  
IN A  
LETTER  
FROM A  
WEST INDIA MERCHANT  
TO A  
WEST INDIA PLANTER.

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A

PERMANENT

AND

EFFECTUAL REMEDY, &c.

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MY DEAR SIR,

YOU have often asked me in the course of the repeated applications to government from the West India body for relief under the calamities which have so nearly overwhelmed them, whether there were no means within our own power capable of being applied, and which must at last be resorted to, if it were found that ministers neither would nor could afford the modes of relief which, at various times, have been pointed out to them, or if those means should prove ineffectual upon experiment.—With great deference I submit to you the following lines; and the result of every consideration I can give the subject is, that on the operation of the remedy I now propose we must ultimately depend for relief. I am not so sanguine as to

believe that every individual planter will adopt it, but I am sure that every planter ought to act for his immediate and permanent interest, upon the principle I shall lay down, and upon which I found all my arguments in support of my present, proposition. Yet if adopted by the great number, the general advantage will soon be felt, and by none so much as those who will pursue the system which can alone place the income derived from property in the British West Indies, upon a permanent security at all resembling a revenue derived from a landed estate in Europe; for that, at last, is the grand object of every West India planter.

It is now nearly a twelvemonth since the rapid decay of the British West Indies has been pressed upon the observation of the government of this country, under two successive administrations. As yet no steps have been taken to afford any substantial remedy for the evils complained of, and such measures only have been resorted to, as were capable of mere partial and temporary relief. It is possible that the government of this country is not capable of affording the relief to the West India planters to an extent to be really effectual, without such an alteration in our political relations with foreign



powers, such a sacrifice of revenue, or such an alteration in the present mode of collecting it, as ministers deem injurious to the general interests of the united kingdom: besides, if the relief is only to be sought in an obstruction to be given to the trade now carried on by America, under the pretended character of a neutral, between the foreign colonies and their mother countries, and that interference is to be necessarily productive of a war with America, every person in this kingdom, even the West India planter would pause and consider, whether the remedy is not nearly as bad as the evil complained of, and whether there is not some other mode capable of being resorted to, which may greatly mitigate if not entirely remove the complaint. In all cases of difficulty it is best to look to our own energies for relief, before we apply for the assistance of others, and the West India body of merchants and planters seem to have continued to petition government and assail ministers for relief, without examining how easily, by a mutual and general co-operation, they might themselves remedy the evil. The abolition of the slave trade, the present state of the continent, and the continuance of the war, while America is allowed, without interruption, to transport the produce of the ene-

mies colonies to Europe, all combine to place the British West Indies in so new and peculiar a situation, that it is of importance to examine, whether these circumstances must not necessarily produce, in the course of a few years, such an alteration in the system hitherto generally pursued upon West India estates in the British islands, as will at last effect the relief we desire. I feel convinced that the remedy I allude to, will silently advance in its operation, and ultimately prove successful; but it is capable of being also immediately applied, and its benefit directly experienced; and if that system were generally recommended and now adopted, to which the West India planters must, of necessity, at last resort, they will save a long interval of calamity to all, and of ruin to many.

I assume as a position, which I believe will be admitted on all hands, that the real cause of the present depressed state of the sugar market is, that the quantity imported exceeds the consumption of the united kingdoms; and that for the surplus quantity, which must necessarily be exported, such a price can only be obtained as is ruinous to the planter. The original intention of the British West India planter was to grow sugar for the consumption of Great Britain and Ireland; and the quantity produced so

nearly met the consumption, that, antecedent to 1791, the exportation rarely exceeded 12,000 hogsheads per annum. From that period, the destruction of St. Domingo occasioned a demand of sugar in our markets for the supply of France and the continent, the prices of course advanced with that new demand, and the British planters extended their cultivation to meet it. Many of them were tempted, not only to exert all the strength of their estates to the production of sugar, but to expend large sums of money in hired negro labour for the same purpose; they abandoned in many instances the system of raising provisions, as they found that they were able by the high price they obtained for sugar, to purchase provisions at a cheaper rate than the value of the land and negro labour, which must otherwise have been employed to raise them. These, and other causes, have tended to increase, in a very extraordinary manner, the quantity of sugar produced in the British colonies, as well as the expences at which the estates were formerly conducted. The advantage of producing that increased quantity of sugar, has entirely ceased, while the additional expences incurred have continued. The market for which the increased quantity was produced has escaped from our command, or is



supplied from a source, the current from which we cannot or do not impede.

In the present state of the continent our colonial produce is every where interdicted, and all beneficial export of it, as far as the West India planter is concerned, at an end.

Can any person attempt to predict when the period will arrive, when an export is likely to produce such an effect in raising the prices in our market, as to compensate the planter for producing and transporting his sugar? The probability is, that it will never return; and therefore the sooner the whole of the West India planters, by reducing their expences, by confining the production of sugar upon all their estates to what the negroes upon them, without the addition of any hired labour, are capable, and after they have produced every thing for their own support which their labour can furnish, or which the estates can supply, so much sooner will that remedy, immediate as well as permanent in its effects, be obtained, to which alone the West India planters must look to remove the calamity they now deplore. I mean broadly to assume, that the growth of sugar in the British West Indies must be confined to the home consumption of Great Britain and Ireland; and, in the present state of affairs, while the

British planter is not allowed to contend upon equal terms with the foreign colonist in the European market, it is the only remedy which can be applied to the evil he has so long laboured under. The evidence produced before the Committee of the House of Commons upon the commercial state of the West India colonies, furnishes the grounds of the argument upon which I found the system I am about so earnestly to recommend to you, and to the consideration of every West India merchant and planter, as affording an immediate and effectual remedy, and with a further desire that the merchant would recommend its adoption to every planter with whom he corresponds, and upon every estate of which he has the direction, not only for the immediate advantage of every individual planter, and each estate, but also as affording the only prospect of permanent and substantial relief.—That the facts upon which I ground my opinions may be known to every one, and capable of being examined, I will not travel out of the report of the Committee I have alluded to, and to the evidence produced before them.

The 72d page of the Report of the Committee of the House of Commons, presents the state of



the import and export sugar from the year 1791 to 1806, inclusive, a period of sixteen years ; and presents the following result, the hundred weights there mentioned being reduced into hogsheads of 13 cwt. each for the facility of investigation and comparison. By this return it appears that from 1791 to 1795, both years inclusive, the quantity retained for home consumption in Great Britain and Ireland was, on the average, 123,274 hhds annually ; that from 1796 to 1800, inclusive, it was 148,964 hhds annually ; and that from 1801 to 1806, inclusive, it was 185,380 hhds annually.

In the period from 1796 to 1800 we had such a demand for the continent, that the market was never, but for a short period in 1799, glutted with a quantity for which no purchasers offered ; and the planter sold his sugar at a price adequate to his expences of manufacture and transport, and giving him also a proper return for his capital employed. The average of that price, as mentioned in the 84th page of the Report, was 65s. 7d. sterling per

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Not having been able to procure the exact return of sugar imported direct into Ireland from the West Indies and other parts, I have been obliged to leave that further quantity of sugar used for home consumption out of my calculation ; but Sir William Young, in the West India Common Place Book, page 61, states it at 11,232 hhds annually.

cwt., exclusive of duty. The whole of our annual average import was then 209,775 hogsheads. The duty was then levied upon the article, and at last paid by the consumer, and was not, as it now is, imposed on the article and paid by the planter without any part of it being repaid in the sale price of the sugar; for at that time the duty was 20s., and the sale price, duty included 85s. 6d; whereas now, the duty is 27s., and the gross sale price, duty included, only 62s.

Since that period the British planter has been increasing his cultivation for the foreign market, while exportation has altogether ceased at prices adequate to his expences and remuneration.

The next series of years, from 1801 to 1806, exhibits, from 1802 to the present time, such a gradual diminution in the amount of the sugar exported, that notwithstanding the reduced prices, the quantity exported in 1806 was not half what it was in 1802; evidently shewing that we are losing, and must at last lose that market altogether; besides, the export of 1806 only took place at such prices at which it would be utter destruction to the planter to continue the cultivation of sugar.

The export of sugar, exclusive  
of the export to Ireland, in  
1802, was . . . . . 143,375

The export of sugar in 1806,  
was . . . . . 67,587

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Shewing, exclusive of the export  
to Ireland, a diminution of 75,788 hhds,  
exported, although the price of sugar, exclu-  
sive of duty, was nearly the same at the two  
periods.

The period from 1801 to 1806, presents an  
average import of 278,228 hogsheads, while the  
average quantity during the same period required  
for the consumption of Great Britain and Ire-  
land, was only 185,380 hogsheads, affording a  
surplus of 92,848 hogsheads, for exportation : and  
the year 1806, with respect to import and export,  
was still more against the planter than the  
average of the above mentioned period, for while  
293,475 hogsheads were imported in 1806,  
67,587 only were exported to foreign countries,  
leaving a surplus of 225,888 hogsheads, while  
only 185,380 hhds would be used for home con-  
sumption, according to the average ; and conse-  
quently leaving 40,508 hogsheads without any  
demand whatever, neither used at home, or



did purchasers offer to export it, even at the reduced prices of last year. It is difficult to conceive a greater folly than continuing the cultivation of an article for a market we have been obliged to abandon, and thus by the increased quantity produced, preventing the planter from deriving any benefit whatever from the cultivation of it, even for the home consumption.

To restore the British planter to his former prosperity, the quantity must be reduced. To shew, that such a practice, generally adopted, would produce the effect of removing all his difficulties, I present two statements ; the one, where an estate producing 300 hogsheads of sugar, sells them at the average price of sugar exclusive of duty, at the time I am writing, and such as it has nearly been for the last six months ; and another where he sells 200 hogsheads from the same estate, at the average price of sugar, exclusive of duty, from 1796 to 1800, as calculated from the 84th page of the report of the committee. That price the people of this country were then content to pay ; at that price, the internal consumption rapidly increased ; and that price is only a fair return to the planter for the risk incurred, and the labour and capital employed. Suppose an estate, producing

300 hogsheads of 13 cwt. nett, each, and that they are sold at the average price of sugar as published in the London Gazette at this time, viz. 35s. exclusive of duty, or the gross price of 62s. including the duty of 27s. per cwt. and the charges of freight, insurance, dock rate, warehouse rate, mercantile commission, and brokerage, amounting as stated in the 4th page of the report to 16s. per cwt. thus forming a reduction of 43s. per cwt. to be made from the sale price, and leaving the planter only a nett price of 19s. per cwt.; 3,900 cwt. at 19s. amount to 3,705*l*. The cost of stores from England, provisions from Ireland, lumber from America, island taxes, salaries to white people, commission to the attornies, hired labour, and a great variety of other expences, amount upon an average, as stated in evidence before the committee, to 20s. per cwt. upon the sugar produced, exclusive of the proceeds of the rum; and consequently without any return for interest of capital, the planter has sustained an actual loss of 195*l*. or 13s. per hogshead. The West India merchant's commission, at  $2\frac{1}{2}$  per cent. on the gross sale price, has amounted to 302*l*. 5s.

If the same estate were to produce only 200 hogsheads of sugar of 13 cwt. each, and they



should be sold at what was the average price from 1796 to 1800; viz. 65s. 7d. per cwt. exclusive of duty, the gross price would be now 95s. 7d. per cwt. and would be subjected to a reduction of 30s. for duty, to which it would, in that event, be advanced; and 16s for the merchantile charges above stated, or 46s. leaving 49s. 7d. to the planter, or 6,445*l.* 16s. 8d. the proceeds of 2,600. cwt. From that amount he will have to deduct 20s. per cwt. for the various charges recited above, or 2,600*l.* leaving 3,845*l.* 16s. 8d. nett to the planter; or 19*l.* 4s. 7d. after all expences and reduction; the merchant's commission upon 2,600 cwt. at the gross price of 95s. 7d. would be 310*l.* 12s. 11d.—In many items of charge with the same number of negroes, the amount of them will be the same, whether 300 or 200 hogsheads were produced; but the saving of lumber, cattle, casks, hired labour, and the circumstance of there being no expenditure for the purchase of any other provisions but salt provisions, would still reduce the expences of cultivating and manufacturing to or below 20s. per cwt. upon the reduced quantity of sugar actually brought to market. A result similar to this, may be produced by reducing the quantity now made in the British West Indies, and imported into Great Britain, for our home

consumption; and thus rendering the market independent of foreign demand, enable the West India merchant to command a price adequate to the remuneration of the planter. How that quantity may be deduced, not only without injury to the planter, but to his immediate and permanent advantage, I will proceed to describe; and with the more earnestness, as I believe the immediate reduction of our import of sugar, to the demand of this country and Ireland, can alone, in the present state of the continent and the neutral carrying trade, produce the remedy we have been seeking in vain from ministers; and which, I fear, they cannot afford but at such risk and sacrifices on the part of this country not to be encountered in the present state of affairs. I conceive that the abolition of the slave trade must of necessity diminish the growth of sugar, and that the prices at which the last three crops have been sold, will necessarily cause many new settled estates, which produce low brown sugars, to be abandoned. If to these causes the planters will generally adopt such a system of conducting their estates, that every article of provisions requisite for the consumption of the white people, the negroes and the stock, shall be produced upon them, and not purchased, the whole quantity

of sugar now produced and sent to Great Britain, and there sold at a manifest loss to the planter, will be diminished nearly one third, or to about the quantity required for our home consumption only; and, whenever that is the case, and there is no longer a glutted market, that remedy we have so long been seeking will be immediately found. No merchant would now attempt to persuade a planter to turn all his land and the labour of his negroes to the cultivation of sugar, and depend upon a supply of provisions for himself, his negroes, and his stock, by purchasing of other planters, or by importation from Europe or America; and if it would be in these times the height of folly to do that, is it not incumbent, on the same principle, that the West India merchant should now address his correspondent, the planter, in the West Indies, in the following terms?—"As the sugar you have sent me, will not now produce you on an average more than 35s. per cwt. exclusive of duty; and from that price, the freight, insurance, dock rate, and all other mercantile charges, amounting altogether to 16s. per cwt. are to be deducted; and as it also further appears from the report of the committee that the average expence of growing and manufacturing the sugar in stores from Europe and



“ America, in taxes and expences in the colony,  
 “ amount to the further sum of 20s. per cwt.  
 “ you will find, that instead of any profit, the  
 “ production and sale of this sugar has been  
 “ attended with a loss : I therefore most earn-  
 “ estly recommend you, before you apply your  
 “ land, the labour of your negroes, and your  
 “ own industry, to the growth and manufac-  
 “ ture of an article at present so unproductive,  
 “ that you will endeavour to supply from the  
 “ labour of your negroes, from the product of  
 “ your own land and the effects of your own  
 “ industry and judgment, all and every article  
 “ of consumption you may require, both of  
 “ corn, or ground provisions, either for the use  
 “ of man or beast. The value of whatever you  
 “ can produce of these indispensable articles,  
 “ which, if not produced, must be purchased,  
 “ is in the present times so much absolutely  
 “ gained : for if the land and labour requisite to  
 “ produce these had been employed in the pro-  
 “ duction of sugar, the amount of the sale of it  
 “ would not have repaid the expences of its pro-  
 “ duction. By pursuing this system of cultiva-  
 “ tion you will at least have this benefit : that  
 “ if the gross proceeds of your estate are not  
 “ increased, the expences of your estate will  
 “ be diminished ; that diminution of expence

“ will be your actual profit, and of which no  
 “ variation of the European market for colo-  
 “ nial produce can deprive you. There is ano-  
 “ ther reason, which also impels me to advise  
 “ you most earnestly to obtain, at all events,  
 “ an ample supply of provisions the production  
 “ of your estate, and the labour of your ne-  
 “ groes, in the first instance, and in preference  
 “ to the crop of sugar you have hitherto pro-  
 “ duced. You are now without hope of ever  
 “ keeping up the numbers of the negroes upon  
 “ your estate but by natural increase: the abo-  
 “ lition of the slave trade precludes the possi-  
 “ bility of recruiting any deficiency which may  
 “ be produced either by natural means, or by  
 “ any injury they may sustain by being either  
 “ overworked or not abundantly supplied with  
 “ provisions. No produce therefore sold at  
 “ any price, however exorbitant, can be a re-  
 “ compence to a planter if obtained at the ex-  
 “ pence of any diminution of the number, or in  
 “ the effective strength of his negroes. If there  
 “ be any thing with the importance of which I  
 “ desire to impress you more than another, it  
 “ is to avoid pushing your estate and the labour  
 “ of your negroes to produce a crop exceeding  
 “ their ability to make with ease, and which  
 “ shall in any way tend to reduce the effective



“ strength of the estate. Never attempt the  
 “ attainment of so temporary a benefit at the  
 “ expence of an evil so permanent and ultimately so ruinous. In recommending this  
 “ measure to you, I am advising what must be  
 “ the opinion of every West India merchant if  
 “ candidly given. If the planter is in debt to  
 “ the merchant, of what avail is it either to  
 “ planter or merchant to consign sugar the proceeds of which are not applied in liquidation of  
 “ the debt, but which will be absorbed in the  
 “ amount of invoices of provisions, or appropriated to the discharge of bills of exchange,  
 “ for the purchase of articles from America, or  
 “ in the colony, which the estate might have  
 “ itself produced? Such a system persevered  
 “ in, must end in ruin.”

The plan here recommended, must, I am satisfied, be at last the mode of plantership adopted upon every West India estate; and, in so numerous a body as the West India planters, if it were now at once generally adopted, the remedy as well to each individual as to the whole body would be immediate; but, if they only wait its partial operation, as the principle may be gradually recognized and its advantages experienced, there will be yet some years of sad suffering for the West India proprietors. The

object now proposed can only be defeated by a jealousy of each other; an apprehension that the system recommended will not be generally adopted; but its adoption or not by the general body is no reason against the practice of it by each individual; for if generally adopted, the individual will participate in the general benefit produced by it, and if it is not generally adopted, and West India affairs should continue as they now are, the individual who pursues it, will, at least, have the full advantage of having curtailed his expences, which he must pay, although the value of his sugar crop may not be increased; but, what is of more moment, the numbers and strength of his negroes being undiminished, his capital will have suffered no reduction. Whatever the negroes may be worth, I conceive, generally speaking, the land, buildings, stock, and utensils, of stills, worms, copper, &c. to be worth two-thirds as much more; but even that value is merely ideal, unless there are negroes to work the land, and occupy the buildings in active and productive labour: if therefore, in the present impossibility of replacing any negroes who may be lost either from excessive labour, or insufficient food, it is not the mere loss of an

individual valued at 90% or 100% sterling, which has been sustained, but an additional loss of two thirds of his value in the deterioration the value of the land and buildings suffer from being unable beneficially to work and employ them. I shall be told perhaps, that to enable the planter to obtain an adequate price for an article the produce of his labour and capital, that he must have an export. It is true, that he must have an export, if the quantity brought to Great Britain exceeds its consumption; and the price at which that export of the surplus quantity can be obtained will fix the price of the whole importation. But what ultimate and permanent good can any export be of to him, when that export can only be obtained when he sells his produce for less than it has cost him to produce it? At this moment the foreign merchant writes to his correspondent in Great Britain, "Ship me sugar at 32s. on board, for with the expences of its conveyance I cannot afford to pay more, so as to be able in any way to meet the price of the colonial produce brought by the American carrier to the continent." Of what use, therefore, is it to the British planter to grow sugar for a market which can only now afford him 32s. for an article for which he ought to obtain 65s. 6d. if he is paid



the cost of producing and transporting it to the place of sale, and expects any adequate return for his labour and capital?

Not being of opinion that the excess of duty is the cause of the present evil, or that the West India body can ever expect the enormous bounties upon exportation which have been suggested as one of the means of enabling the British planter to meet the neutral carrier in the markets of France, Germany, and Holland, I have abstained from going into any discussion on those points, and various others of general West-India interest, because I intend to confine this letter to the purpose of shewing how the West India body possess themselves the means of their own speedy, effectual, and permanent relief, if they have but resolution individually to practise them; and if the West India merchants of Great Britain will earnestly recommend the measure, no doubt can be entertained of its general adoption.

You will naturally ask, to what extent I expect the reduction in the quantity of sugar made in the British West Indies will be effected by the causes I have before mentioned, and the system I have recommended every planter to adopt in the cultivation of his estate? The quantity now produced in the British West Indies, in the conquered colonies, and which upon

the average of the last six years has been imported in Great Britain, is 278,228 hogsheads, of 13 cwt. nett each.

On examining the evidence produced before the Committee, and especially in that part of the evidence adduced as to the product, and expences of estates, it is impossible not to be struck with the charge for hired labour, which presents itself in all the instances to which I now allude, viz. the account of the estates from No. 1 to No. 8, stated in the Appendix, page 24 to 31, inclusive. The hired labour amounts to 3258*l.*, and has been expended, in addition to the negroes belonging to those estates, amounting in number to 2186, to produce an average crop of 1734 hogsheads the particulars are as follow.

No. 1, 300 negroes made 244 hhds, hired labour 480*l.* sterl.

2, 268	_____	201	_____	_____	561
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3, 276	_____	223	_____	_____	393
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4, 178	_____	138	_____	_____	357
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5, 151	_____	127	_____	_____	453
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6, 150	_____	131	_____	_____	168
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7, 344	_____	205	_____	_____	273
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8, 519	_____	465	_____	hired labour,	
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				average of	
				4 years -	573

_____	_____	_____
2186	1734	3258
_____	_____	_____



The hired labour has amounted to 1*l.* 17*s.* 6*d.* for every hogshead produced. According to the principle I have laid down, that no planter should, at the present prices, and with an overstocked market, incur any additional expences to produce an article, the sale of which does not afford the expences of its growth, manufacture, and conveyance, I must consider, that all the hired labour expended in Jamaica, to produce a crop of sugar exceeding the quantity capable of being made upon each estate by its own negroes, has been so much actual loss incurred by the planter. If the crop of Jamaica consists on an average of 140,000 hogsheads annually, and the expenditure of hired labour upon the estates alluded to, affords a fair criterion by which we may compute the whole quantity of hired labour employed in the sugar crops of that island, we shall find that a sum not less than 263,000*l.* sterling has been so expended. The hired negroes are generally all able field negroes; and it may be computed that the increased quantity, added to what would otherwise have been the average crops of the sugar estates in Jamaica, cannot be less than one hogshead for every able field negroe thus annually employed. If each hired field negroe is valued at an average at 90*l.*

sterling, and you compute his hire at  $12\frac{1}{2}$  per cent. per annum, and  $3\frac{1}{2}$  per cent. per ann. for the amount of the risk of the insurance that his value shall not be depreciated in the employment of the planter hiring him, being, together, 16 per cent., or 14*l.* 8*s.* sterling; and the further expence of maintenance, cloathing, medical attendance, &c. are computed at 15*l.* sterling per head more, the sum of 29*l.* sterling has been expended by the planter to make a hogshead of sugar, which he can only sell for 11*l.* 9*s.* 5*d.*, or an actual loss of at least 17*l.* 10*s.* sterling, for every negroe he has annually hired; and without any allowance for the rent of land, use of buildings, cattle, &c., which have been also employed\*. I know how impossible it is to reduce

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\* In many parts of the West Indies the hired labour of able field negroes, per day, is computed and paid for at the rate of half a dollar, or 2*s.* 3*d.* sterling, in which case the proprietor of the negroe pays all the expences of cloathing, feeding, medical attendance, &c. In the calculation mentioned in the text, 10*d.* sterling per day, is only taken to remunerate those expences. In many instances the money expended in hired labour is in task-work, the jobber contracting at a certain price per acre, to hole the land for canes, and make it compleatly ready for planting; but that is only another mode of computing the same thing, which is the number of days work of negroe labour expended upon the estate,

the calculation above attempted to a certainty, but it is one mode of approaching it, and if admitted as not very erroneous, it indicates the employment of about 15,000 negroes of all descriptions as hired labourers upon the sugar estates in Jamaica, the produce of whose labour cannot be computed at less than 15,000 hogsheads of sugar per annum. Exclusive of the estates above alluded to, I have had an opportunity of seeing the returns of others: upon some the expence of hired labour much exceeded the average now assumed as the basis of calculation; on others it was almost exactly this amount, on others somewhat less; and I know that, on many estates, it is scarcely, or not at all, incurred:—but, whoever is acquainted with the system, regularity and ability with which

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whether performed by one negro in 300 days, or 300 negroes in one day. The mode of hiring negroes at a percentage upon their valuation, and also giving security, that their value and number shall not be diminished, is also not unfrequent: in this case all the expences of cloathing, feeding, lodging, medical attendance, &c. are paid by the person hiring them. I have before me several instances of a dollar a day being paid for the hire of negroes employed on board boats or merchant vessels, the persons hiring them also feeding them; and in the harbours in the West Indies, a dollar a day is the usual rate of hire.



the affairs of that gentleman are conducted, to whom the public at large, and the West India body in particular, are so much indebted for his evidence before the Committee, and the accounts he furnished of the expences and returns of the eight estates before adverted to, will be satisfied that the picture there exhibited must be more favourable than can be presented of the sugar estates in general in Jamaica. As far as general opinion may be allowed in aid of a particular calculation, I may adduce the opinion of many West India merchants who have long resided in, and whose attention is peculiarly directed to Jamaica, in support of the computation, that, at least, one tenth is added to the ordinary crops of the estates by the addition of labour hired in aid of that of the negroes attached to the estates.

Perhaps it will be urged, that by the addition of these hired negroes in aid of the negroes always attached to, and employed upon the estate, a great relief was afforded to them in the more laborious parts of the cultivation, and that the advantage to the estates was greater than the production of one hogshead for the labour of every hired negroe. In reply to that I have only to observe, that I cannot conceive it possible for any labour to be beneficial so hired by the planter, when the article produced by the



labour does not pay the mere expence of its cultivation, and when perhaps it would be advantageous to the planter, to discontinue the cultivation of sugar altogether, and wait for more favourable markets, if it were not for the injury the estate would ultimately suffer by being entirely thrown out of the regular course of husbandry.

The cost at which the crop is produced, in no way affects the profits of the attorney on the island; he is equally well paid, whether the hired labour of the estate is 500*l.* or 1000*l.* sterling; and his profits may actually be increased by an expenditure which brings utter ruin upon the absent proprietor. Upon all estates where the attorney, the manager, or the overseer, are the owners of the negroes hired to assist in working the estate, a dissatisfaction always pervades the negroes belonging to the estate: they compare the task they have to perform with that imposed on the negroes so hired; they compare the allowances of land and provisions allotted to the different negroes, and they universally find, or think they find, that the hired negroes are employed in lighter labour, and treated with more indulgence.

If the system of employing hired negroes prevails in the other colonies in the same proportion as in Jamaica: and if in these colonies

a proportionate increased quantity of sugar is the result of their labour, an expenditure of hired labour has been incurred to the amount of upwards of 258,000*l.* to produce an addition of 13,000 hogsheads of sugar, making with the sugar now produced by hired labour in Jamaica, the extraordinary quantity of 28,000 hogsheads produced in the sugar colonies in the West Indies, at an expence for which the planter is not remunerated, and contributing to occasion the overstocked market, the cause of his present calamity.

I confess I am unable to state any exact quantity, by which I can suppose that the production of sugar will be diminished in the British colonies in consequence of the abolition of the slave trade, and in consequence of the attention which will be paid by every planter to prevent his negroes being over-worked; but I cannot imagine the reduction from those two causes will be less when they begin effectually to operate, than 10 per cent. upon the amount of the present annual average produce, and that would occasion a further reduction of 27,800 hogsheads.

The devoting the labour of the negroes upon all estates to the raising of all kinds of provisions necessary for themselves or the stock, either altogether or in greater abundance than has

hitherto been the case, and applying to that purpose a part of the land now employed for the growth of canes, can scarcely be computed as affecting the present quantity of sugar produced by less than a reduction of 5 per cent., or 13,900 hogsheads annually.

The sum of these reductions will be,

15,000 from abandoning the ruinous system of hired labour in Jamaica,

13,000 from the abandonment of the same system in the other colonies,

27,800 a reduction from the abolition of the slave trade, &c.

13,900 from devoting the labour of the negroes, and part of the cane land to provisions, &c.

---

69,700

Our average import for the last six years has been . . . . . 278,228 hhds.

Our home consumption of Great Britain and Ireland . . . . . 185,380

---

Surplus for exportation 92,848

Produce diminished by the causes abovementioned . . . 69,700

---

Leaving a surplus of only 23,148



to be taken off either by an increased, or new consumption in this country, or for exportation to the continent. What number of sugar estates settled within the last eight years, and what reduction in the quantity of sugar produced, will take place from many of those estates being abandoned, I do not attempt to compute; but every person acquainted with Jamaica, and especially with Trinidad, estimates the number at a large amount; and with respect to the latter colony, considers that there the growth of sugar may, of necessity, be discontinued altogether.

To the plan proposed of thus reducing the quantity of sugar produced in the British West Indies, it may be objected, that the restitution of the conquered colonies at a peace, will, of itself, so reduce the present import into Great Britain, as to render the introduction of this system unnecessary. An examination into the probable state of the sugar trade at a peace, will, I think, shew that even then no export favourable for the planter can be expected, and that he should still look to the home consumption of the united kingdom only, as the demand which is to take off his produce.

In the first place it must be observed, that if



the system here recommended should not at all be adopted in the British West Indies, and those causes should not operate so as to produce the diminished quantity I expected, there will be a much greater quantity of sugar produced in those colonies, and of necessity imported into Great Britain and Ireland, than will be requisite for the supply of the united kingdom. That surplus quantity must be exported, and it will limit and fix the price of the whole importation. There is every reason to apprehend that when Cuba, Porto Rico, Cayenne, Guadeloupe, Surinam, and Demarara, pour their unlimited supply into the European market, without even the shadow of restriction, and with the advantages as far as relates to Cuba, and the settlements on the continent of South America, of a new and unimpoverished soil, that the colonists of the old established British West Indies will not be able to contend with them, either in cheapness, or quantity of produce; and if we judge from the policy pursued during the last short interval of peace, every obstacle will be thrown in the way to prevent the introduction of all the articles of British colonial produce into any part of the continent, either directly or indirectly under the influence of the French govern-

ment. Indeed, one of the fundamental laws of the recent confederation upon the continent, which includes, or will in every probability include the whole of Germany and Italy, provides, that the produce of the trade and manufacture of each member of the confederation shall circulate freely through the territories of the Union, while the produce of all British trade and manufacture will probably remain absolutely prohibited. To the produce of the colonies of France, Spain, and Holland, and of any neutral country, these advantages will be extended; while prohibitions, or duties acting as completely prohibitory, will exclude those of Great Britain altogether. The slave trade is at length abolished, as far as the British colonies are concerned, and for ever; but it is impossible to believe that it will not be carried on with increased eagerness by France and Holland, as soon as peace is restored. The trade being abandoned by this country and America, and having no competitors on the coast, they will obtain at very reduced rates slaves; which have cost the British planters such high prices; those negroes will be poured in unlimited numbers into Cuba and the colonies on the southern continent; and the same evil of an over-stocked

market may be felt on the continent of Europe of which we now complain here. I conceive it therefore as hopeless to continue the cultivation of sugar to the extent it is now carried on in the British West Indies, with reference to, and the expectation of, an export at favourable prices, whenever peace is concluded, as it is to do so now : and I think I have satisfactorily shewn that now, and during the present war, and as long as the present state of affairs continues on the continent, no export at prices to remunerate the planter can be expected. The restitution of the conquered colonies at a peace may, I presume, occasion a reduction in the quantity imported into Great Britain and Ireland of about 50 hogsheads per annum, and would thus bring the whole average import in time of peace to about 228,000 hogsheads, supposing that no effect, which is scarcely possible, should be produced by those causes by which I believe the quantity will be so much diminished. Even that quantity would demand an export of upwards of 40,000 hogsheads, which there seems no prospect of being able to obtain any market for, even during peace, upon the continent, at such prices as ought to induce the planter to proceed in the cultivation. Let the West India planter put



the idea of growing for a foreign market out of his calculation, and content himself by growing with the least expence, sugar for the consumption of these kingdoms only.

In the prosecution of this system, it may be objected, that the general commerce and navigation of the kingdom, will suffer from the diminished export of sugar from the British West Indies. If the owners of shipping employed in the West India trade, imagine that they will be able to continue in that department of business as many vessels, as have been lately employed in it, they will find themselves most deplorably deceived. If voluntarily the system I propose is not generally and at once adopted by the generality of the West India planters, it will be forced upon them at last, and in each case a tonnage diminished in the same proportion must be the consequence: that will not be the fault of the West Indies, but it is the misfortune of the country at large; that the progress and ill-success of the war which has excluded us from the continent, renders it now no longer desirable for the planter to produce and bring to Great Britain an article, which he cannot for that reason dispose of without a great and serious loss. The West Indies are not able to pay such a tax to the owners of British shipping,



and if they were, it would be unjust that they should. As far as the revenue collected from sugar is concerned, instead of sustaining any injury, it will be increased, for the duty is now only collected upon what is actually consumed in the united kingdom : if the gross price is advanced to 80s. per cwt. an increase of duty takes place of 3s. per cwt. whereas now a considerable amount is necessarily expended in the bounty and drawback at this time allowed upon exportation, beyond the duty imposed and paid upon importation.

I will not, in the consideration of this question, which I have endeavoured to confine as much as possible, go into the investigation of those modes of relief which have been suggested to ministers, and which involve our political relations with foreign powers; they may be adopted, and they may prove effectual; but if I was desired to point out the mode in which I conceive the exertion of government could best and most effectually be exerted for the relief of the West India interest, and at the same time for the general benefit of the trade, manufactures and navigation of Great Britain, it would be by prohibiting foreign brandy altogether, either in the navy or for internal consumption; affording, by a reduction of the duty, a de-

cided encouragement to the use of British plantation rum, and assimilating as much as possible the trade and intercourse between the colonies and the mother-country, to the mode in which they are maintained between the different provinces of the united kingdom. The advantages resulting from such encouragement would be, first the employ of that proportion of the West India shipping which must otherwise, from the reduced quantity of sugar produced, be thrown out of employ : next, the value of every puncheon of rum imported will be exported in manufactured goods, in addition to what are now shipped to the West Indies, or obtaining here a market, it will be exchanged for the produce of British commerce, of the British fishery, and British agriculture, exported in British vessels, instead of being now bartered at a great depreciation for the produce of America, transported in American bottoms. Recent publications have so accurately detailed the calculation of the cost of the conveyance of the two articles, that I need not repeat them, nor are they material to my argument ; it is the principle for which I contend, and which I recommend as the true policy to be pursued by this kingdom, and especially in its present situation.

I may be allowed here particularly to point

out one mode in which the West Indies are enabled to benefit the mother country, and obviate one of the evils created by the exclusion of British commerce from the ports of the continent, under the influence of the French government; but to render it eminently beneficial, there must be an exchange of two commodities; or rather, there must be a market afforded in this country for rum, to enable the West Indies to pay for a new article of export, from this country, at least to the West Indies. The article to which I particularly allude, is pilchards from Cornwall;—until excluded from Spain and Italy, upwards of 45,000 hogsheads of pilchards caught upon the coasts and within the harbours of Cornwall, were annually cured and exported to those countries, but they were not prepared in a way to secure them in a voyage to the West Indies; and when occasionally sent there, they had, from that cause, too frequently failed to be trusted to as an article of provision. Within this twelvemonth upwards of 10,000 hogsheads of pilchards, cured and packed for the Italian market, and certified by the proper officers as fit for exportation, have been thrown upon the land as manure, because the market for which they were intended was shut against them. It will be in the recollection



of some of the members of the Board of Trade, how desirous that Board was, that an experiment should be made how far the pilchards of Cornwall would succeed in the West Indies ;—a West India gentleman present promised to make the experiment ; a ship and cargo of pilchards, properly prepared and cured for the West Indies, was provided, and the experiment has completely answered ; the pilchards were received in good order, they were greatly approved as an article of food by the negroes, and certificates returned from the West Indies from a great variety of persons unite in declaring, that they were received not only in a condition to be good and wholesome food, but in a state likely to continue to be so for three or even six months to come. These pilchards were offered at a much cheaper rate than herrings, and little doubt can be entertained but that practice and the natural result of competition in the fish curers will, in a short time, render the pilchards even better adapted for the West India market than they now are. In the evidence of Mr. Hughan before the Committee of the House of Commons, page 61, he states the quantity of herrings required by the West India colonies at from 180,000 to 200,000 barrels annually. There seems little doubt but that the certainty of a



market, of which we cannot be deprived, would greatly encourage and tend rapidly to encrease not only the fishery for pilchards in Devonshire and Cornwall, but all the other fisheries upon the coasts of the united kingdom. According to the price at which pilchards have been purchased for the West India market, the export of 180,000 barrels of pilchards would pay 200,000*l.* to the fisheries of Cornwall and Devon, pay 90,000*l.* in freight outwards to British shipping engaged in the trade to the West Indies, and in the convoy duty of 4 per cent. pay 8000*l.* per ann. into the Exchequer. But to enable the planter to purchase, he must be able to pay for them by the proceeds of the sale of his rum, and at 15*l.* per puncheon, it will require the sale of 20,000 puncheons of rum to enable him to do so. To convey that quantity of rum to Great Britain will require 10,000 ton of British shipping, the freight of which from the West Indies, at the time I am now writing, would be upwards of 100,000*l.* sterling. It is the opportunity that is afforded to the West India planter of bartering his rum to the American, that is the real inducement for him to trade with him; in that mode of barter he acquires many articles with which he might be supplied by Great Britain, but he gets rid of an article which, if

sent to Great Britain, will scarcely pay the cost of its conveyance, when left in competition with foreign brandy imported under licences in neutral bottoms.

I have ventured, contrary to my original intention, into some detail upon this subject, a new one, and I think not a little important to the mother country as well as the West Indies. It puts in a strong light the advantages which may be acquired by every interest connected with the trade, commerce, manufacture, agriculture, fishery, navigation and revenue of the united kingdom, from encouraging reciprocally in the mother country and the colonies the consumption of the productions of each. The colonial trade is the only trade this country can absolutely command, and the scene of it the navy is alone able to protect; while the navy, on which the nation so confidently relies, is more indebted for its creation and maintenance to the West Indies, than any other foreign commerce carried on by this kingdom: no decree of prohibiting all intercourse; no non-importation act, can deprive Great Britain of the advantages of its West India trade; and what I have laid before you respecting this article will tend to shew, how far proper encouragement may promote the advantage of both the mother coun-

try and the colonies, by applying generally, in respect to other articles, the principle and practice I have here proposed.

There is no reason arising either out of intended alterations at home, proposed restrictions on the neutral carrying-trade, or any foreign or extraneous matter whatever, that should prevent the prudent West India planter from adopting the plan I have in this letter recommended to you; for it is the only plan that renders him independent of foreign assistance: he will feel in his reduced expences an ample compensation, and, with his capital undiminished, he will be ready, whenever the increased demand of Great Britain calls for it, to extend his cultivation.

The view I have taken of West India affairs, recently, has been attended thus far with satisfaction, that I feel confident that we have a means of relief in our own power; that of necessity that relief will soon be felt; and that as the production of sugar will necessarily, from the various causes I have mentioned, be diminished in the British West Indies, while the consumption of the article in this kingdom is so rapidly increasing, there is no probability of the same distress recurring, since the produce being only equal to the consumption, we shall be indepen-



dent of the foreign market. It is upon that increased home consumption that the West India planter may safely rely, and which will reward his labour. The rapidly increasing population, the increased luxury of the people, the taste for sugar so generally gratified by its recent low price, will not only prevent the consumption being diminished, but will tend rapidly to promote it. It is now consumed for food in various ways more generally than it used to be ; it is applied to purposes for which formerly it was not employed ; and it may be safely asserted, that no human being, having been once accustomed to the use of it, voluntarily relinquishes it. In the Appendix, A, the average quantity consumed in the united kingdom was, in the first period, 123,274 hogsheads ; in the next, at very high prices, 148,964 hogsheads ; and, in the last, 185,380 hogsheads annually ; and I am assured by a very well-informed person, conversant in every part of the sugar trade, that he has every reason to believe that the consumption of Great Britain for the year 1806 exceeded 200,000 hogsheads. With this prospect, the West Indians have no reason to despair ; with their own exertions, and the judicious aid and regulations of government, they will weather this storm, and resume again that

important and honourable character, by which they have been so long distinguished in the annals of the British Commerce and Navigation.

I have the honour to be,

Dear Sir, with great regard,

Your very obedient servant, &c.

P. S. In the present situation of West India affairs, it seems more especially the duty of every prudent planter to nurse his resources, and preserve his active capital unimpaired in number and vigour, that he may be prepared to employ it, and enjoy the full benefit of his exertions, whenever the state of the commerce, or the wants of this kingdom afford him a prospect of ample remuneration. At this moment, and, indeed, at all times, his unremitted attention should be bestowed on his negroes, to take care of them in sickness, to provide for them in health, to encourage marriage and morality among them, and looking upon them as partners and joint proprietors with him in his estate, render them, with due regard to a proper subordination, as happy and comfortable as the nature of their situation admits of. To shew how those intentions can best be carried into effect, let me with confidence and earnestness recommend that invaluable publication to every west India proprietor, entitled, "Practical Rules for the Management and Medical Treatment of Negroe Slaves in the Sugar Colonies, by a Professional Planter." I feel assured that no planter who has seen that book will here disagree with me in opinion; and those who acquire it, after this recommendation, will probably do as I have done, and provide every estate with which they are connected with a copy of it, and urge the strictest attention to its precepts on their managers and overseers.

## APPENDIX A.

An Account of the Quantity of SUGAR, imported from all Parts into Great Britain from the Year 1791 to the Year 1806, inclusive, distinguishing each Year; also the Quantity of the same exported to all Parts, in the same Period; distinguishing the Export to Ireland, from the Export to other parts; the refined reduced into raw on the Principle of 34 to 20.

N. B. This Account is stated in Hogsheads of 13 Cwt. nett each, for the Facility of Comparison and Investigation.

Years.	Imported.	Exported.			Retained for Consumption in Gt. Britain and Ireland.
		To Ireland.	To other Parts.	Total.	
	Hhds.	Hhds.	Hhds.	Hhds.	Hhds.
1791	139,476	10,895	20,642	31,537	118,834
1792	153,018	9,020	39,260	48,280	113,758
1793	168,825	11,867	27,950	39,817	140,875
1794	193,783	12,598	66,618	79,214	127,165
1795	165,482	12,943	49,744	62,687	115,738
1796	172,325	11,111	41,676	52,787	130,649
1797	164,607	16,026	50,602	66,628	114,005
1798	207,682	13,563	80,537	94,101	127,145
1799	260,844	16,245	31,335	47,580	229,509
1800	243,421	27,598	99,906	127,504	143,515
1801	305,889	9,432	83,089	92,521	222,800
1802	330,545	14,069	143,375	157,444	187,170
1803	245,069	11,665	118,588	130,253	226,484
1804	249,870	12,518	72,400	84,918	177,470
1805	244,521	12,771	72,051	84,822	172,470
1806	293,475	10,369	67,587	77,956	225,888



Average Annual Import for five Years from

1st Jan. 1791 to 31st Dec. 1795 - - 164,116

Average Annual Export, (exclusive of Export to Ireland) during the same period 40,842

---

Average Annual Quantity retained for Consumption in Great Britain and Ireland - 123,274 Hhds.

---

Average Annual Import for five Years from

1st Jan. 1796 to 31st Dec. 1800 - - 209,775

Average Annual Export (exclusive of Export to Ireland) during the same Period 60,811

---

Average Annual Quantity retained for Consumption in Great Britain and Ireland 148,964 Hhds.

---

Average Annual Import for six Years from

1st Jan. 1801 to 31st Dec. 1806 - - 278,228

Average Annual Export (exclusive of Export to Ireland) during the same period 92,848

---

Average Annual Quantity retained for Consumption in Great Britain and Ireland - 185,380 Hhds.

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N. B. This account is exclusive of the sugar consumed in Ireland imported direct from the West Indies.

## APPENDIX B.

Extract from an Account of the General Average Prices of Brown or Muscovado Sugar, exclusive of all Duties, for 13 Years, ending the 5th Day of January 1806;—shewing the Average Price of Sugar from 1796 to 1800, both Years inclusive.

When published.	For what Time.	Average Prices.	
		s.	d.
1796, Feb. 23,	Six weeks preceding Feb. 23, 1796	63	8½
	Oct. 29, ----- Oct. 23, -----	62	7
1797, Feb. 25, -----	Feb. 23, 1797	64	7
	Aug. 26, ----- Aug. 23, -----	64	10
	Oct. 28, ----- Oct. 28, -----	62	11½
1798. Feb. 24, -----	Feb. 23, 1798	67	3½
	June 23, ----- June 23, -----	68	11½
	Aug. 25, ----- Aug. 23, -----	65	11
	Oct. 27, ----- Oct. 23, -----	67	6½
1799, Feb. 23, -----	Feb. 23, 1799	69	3½
1800, Jan. 11, -----	Jan. 5, 1800	57	6½
	April 5, ----- April 5, -----	66	2
	Nov. 10, ----- Nov. 10, -----	71	3½

N. B. The Account, of which this is an Extract, was laid before the Committee of the House of Commons appointed to consider the Commercial State of the West India Colonies, and is to be found in the Appendix, in the 84th Page of their Report. The Average Price of the whole Period is 65s. 7d. per Cent. exclusive of Duty.

THE END.





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